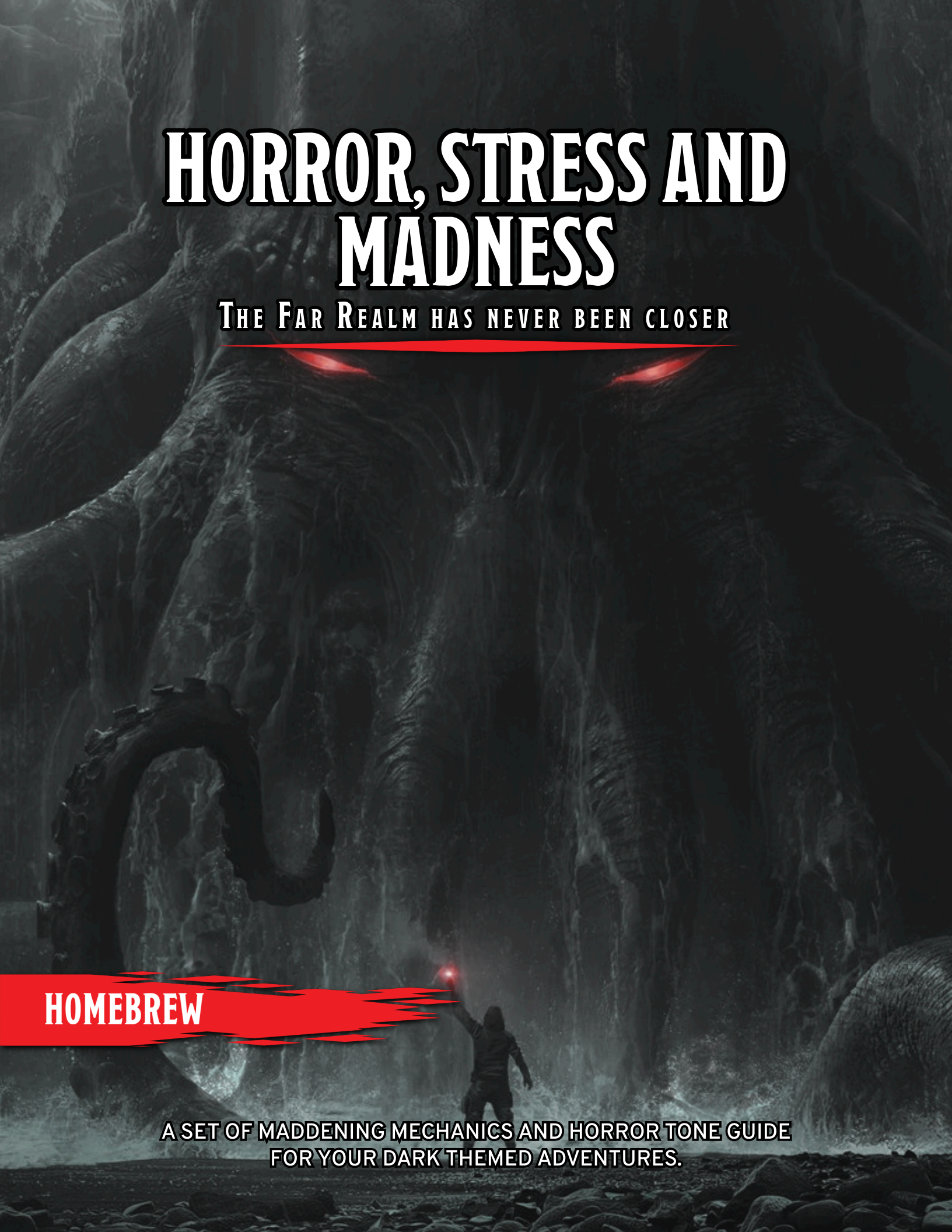

HORROR, STRESS AND MADNESS

The Far Realm has never been closer

HOMEBREW

A SET OF MADDENING MECHANICS AND HORROR TONE GUIDE FOR YOUR DARK THEMED ADVENTURES.

Horror, Stress and Madness

This game system delves into themes of cosmic horror, psychological strain, and supernatural madness. It is designed to enhance the horror atmosphere while giving players meaningful mechanics for how their characters cope with fear and the unknown.

This system can be used seamlessly alongside existing rules of D&D 5th (or 5.5) edition. It's built around three mechanics:

- **Horror Tokens** – These represent the emotional weight of disturbing experiences. The more you have, the higher the risk of a mental breakdown, increasing your Stress level.
- **Stress** – This mental level (similar to Exhaustion) changes by how horror is handled. Higher levels of Stress make it harder to think straight and resist the pull of madness.
- **Madness** – An effect applied to a character when Stress reaches specific levels. It changes their personality or worldview, and grants eerie powers.

This isn't just for grimdark horror. It works for gothic mystery or even high fantasy with a touch of the unsettling. However you use it, one thing's for sure: horror, and perhaps the characters, will not be the same anymore.

Editorial Notes

This system was designed for a specific homebrew campaign but is structured to be easily adapted for other games. Feel free to use as much (or as little) of it as you like!

Alpha Version. This system is still in early development and hasn't been fully play-tested. I'd love to hear your feedback!

Disclaimer. This system is a game mechanic, not a real-world mental health model. Just like D&D's fast healing for physical wounds, this system abstracts psychological strain to fit gameplay. If you or someone you know struggles with mental health, please seek support from a professional.

Safe Games. Horror in tabletop RPG should be thrilling, not distressing. Please use open discussion and safety tools to ensure that everyone at the table enjoys a fun, immersive, and respectful experience.

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A Short Horror Story

Within the damp catacombs of Castle Ravenloft, Rowan crept from one sarcophagus to the next, trying not to draw attention to himself. From the other side of the cold stone, he heard gurgled sighs and the halting screech of a single spearhead scratching against the stone floor.

His body trembled so deeply that he didn't trust his hands with weapons. Being quiet meant being alive. So he crawled, using his hands for support, trying not to let his shaking hands drum against the hard surface.

Rowan eyed the entry to the catacombs. The door was still open, having been lockpicked when they first entered. The lock was tricky, Arly had said. She'd left the pin in, ensuring it wouldn't slam shut and relock itself. This was before - before.

He felt an imposing silence filling the room. The screeching was gone. He turned his head.

A man clad in rusted armor held a broken spear aloft. Rowan was barely able to roll away as the spear came down. He felt a cold streak across the side of his head, before warmth pooled down his ear. Rowan kicked hard against the guard's knee, breaking it off and sending the leg scattering across the floor. The guard, unbothered, let out a demonic shriek as its jaw broke loose on one side, leaving it dangling from rotten flesh and sinew.

Rowan dodged the next strike and pushed himself up. Glancing around the room, more undead turned their profane gaze towards him. He ran, reached the door and slammed it against the weight of his pursuers. Through the door's barred window, they screamed and gurgled, threatening to barge through.

The wild eyes of the undead guards, the grotesque distortions of their flesh, the suffocating stench of their breath - it was unholy and deeply disturbing. Rowan felt the horror dig deep into his mind, and his stomach tied a knot.

He grit his teeth and summoned every last bit of strength he had. A desperate push against the wall behind him gave enough leverage to force the door shut. He then pulled out the lockpin, and the door made a promising metallic click.

Rowan fell back, too tired to stand, and prayed to any gods listening that the door would hold. The undead guards continued their howls and growls, pressing their rotting faces against the bars, slamming their broken bodies against the door, again and again.

During what felt like forever, the terrifying display was replaced by a creeping hope for survival. The door didn't show any sign of giving in. At least, for now.

With a trembling breath, Rowan looked down at his breeches, now soiled. Reaching a hand to his temple, he felt a searing sting. His hand came down bloodied, but the bleeding seemed to have lessened. He'd need someplace safe to tend to it before too long.

Watching the unrelenting undead, he stood up and made way for the staircase.

Atop the stairs, he emerged into vast and echoing halls, dimly lit by flickering torches. Crouching low, he crept along the walls. Above, a macabre tableau of twisted figures and distorted faces leered down, as if mocking him. Surely, these paintings looked different from when they had first arrived. He locked eyes with one of the paintings. It seemed to stare at him - did it? A shiver went down his spine, like the chill of a dying sun, and he ran.

Looking for refuge, Rowan found an empty room - save for a desk, drawer, chair and scattered papers. He barricaded the door using the drawer, draped his cloak over a desk for a makeshift tent to hide underneath, and then crawled inside. He pulled out a dagger and held it with both hands, shaking, as he awaited whatever evil might have followed him. No evil came, so he waited. Waited.

He woke up in a panic, his eyes darting left and right. The dagger was on the floor beside him, his cloak still draped above, and the door still barricaded as before.

He moved to crawl out but his throbbing head made him dizzy, blackened his vision, and forced him back down again. He'd be needing rest. And bandages. At least the bleeding seemed to have stopped.

For the first time since entering the castle, Rowan let out a deep sigh. This place had put them all on edge. And things had happened, terrible things. He'd spent so much time surviving, there hadn't been room to process it all.

He looked around for his backpack with fresh bandages, then realized it was left behind with... the others. So he took off his shirt and started ripping it into strips of fabric. It would've been better to use a clean cloth, not one soaked in sweat. Besides, he liked this shirt. It had been a gift from Gwen. Not a year after they first met. That was before - before.

He tore at his shirt. *Rip!*

Memories started playing in his mind. Rowan and the rest had been hired as mercenaries by a rich benefactor, who needed an escort to Castle Ravenloft: old ruins with even older stories, empty halls and full coffers, easy money and no one to miss them - this was the promise. Their protection was only an insurance to ward off other treasure seekers. It turned out, however, the halls were not so empty, and the coffers - *Rip!*

Rowan shivered. The memories were painful. He tried to resist the horrific memories, yet with every rip of his shirt, the images in his mind pressed forward, insisting on being witnessed, understood, accepted.

Rip! Gwen was the first to die, falling through a hidden gate in the floor, down to a pit of fanged humanoids with hungry eyes - she had screamed while they pulled her apart.

Rip! Kalros tried to ward off a group of undead guards, but was eventually overwhelmed - his battlecry became a cry amid rotting, flailing arms.

Rip! Gadvar had rushed to a nearby chest, only to set off an explosive trap - burnt flesh was smeared across the wall.

Rip! Tibbin was possessed by a specter and then assaulted Arly, before throwing himself into the same pit as Gwen.

Rip! Within all the chaos, surrounded by death and screams, the benefactor simply stood there. His head bent forward, shoulders bobbing up and down - it seemed he was crying, as if lamenting the decision to come here, yet the walls echoed with laughter.

Rip! Only Rowan had been able to flee. Terrified and powerless, he had abandoned them all, using the confusion to hide until the screams stopped. Until only gurgled sighs were left. And the scraping of a spear. *Rip!*

His arms fell limp on each side. He didn't want to believe any of this. His chest sank, his limbs went numb, and tears pressed behind his eyes. His stomach convulsed, insisted he'd cry, but Rowan couldn't. Crying, he thought, would only confirm his helplessness, the horrors below, and the likely doom awaiting him in the halls of Castle Ravenloft.

The world started to spin. Fear shot through him, and he didn't know whether to fight or flee. The stress tore at his insides.

He closed his eyes, trying to find better thoughts, and then his body seemed so distant. He entertained the idea of how unreasonable it all seemed. His crew was strong, skilled, and smart. They couldn't be beaten by an old ruin or some wandering bones. And they certainly wouldn't accept a quest from a person as dodgy as this benefactor... bone-factor. Bone factory!

A contorted chuckle broke the silence.

He repeated the words to himself, realizing how ridiculous it all sounded.

A bellowing laughter broke out from underneath the draped desk. Rowan felt his fear wash away as relief and joy overtook him. A grin slashed across his face as he looked down at his bloodied hands.

This wasn't real! Of course, it couldn't be. How could it? None of this was! Not real!

He laughed again, and his roars rang from his room's refuge, into the halls, echoing his discordant amusement. Shifting shadows grew from the dark corners, and they danced as the delighted shrieks turned to a maddening glee.

A bad dream, Rowan decided. And, like all dreams, this too must end.

Horror Tokens

Horror Tokens represent unresolved psychological strain — unprocessed fear, shock, and trauma that lingers at the edge of the mind. They are not an immediate threat, but rather a slowly increasing debt that must eventually be paid.

These Horror Tokens are removed during moments of stillness, such as during rest, as the mind attempts to process what it has endured, leading either to a healthy resolve or a mental breakdown (see Stress Check).

Gaining Horror Tokens

Anything that may inflict Horror Tokens, is called a **Horror**. Anyone subjected to a Horror must make a saving throw or gain **1 Horror Token**, along with any other consequence(s) for that Horror.

For particularly terrifying Horrors, a failure may inflict 2 Horror Tokens instead, at DM's discretion. If a character fails their saving throw against a Horror by **10 or more**, they gain an additional Horror Token.

Horror Tokens are applied only to player characters.

Sources of Horror

These are terrifying experiences, including but not limited to:

- Witnessing grotesque scenes,
- Mind-affecting or eldritch magic or monsters,
- Anything that cause the Frightened condition.

Below are some examples of Horrors:

Fright

Frights are resource draining challenges, similar to Traps or Hazards. These affect the mind rather than the body. In addition to afflicting Horror Token(s), failing these may cause additional setbacks, depending on the Horror itself (e.g. psychic damage, curses, etc.).

See Frights (page 9) for more information and specific examples.

Monsters

Certain monsters, such as a dragon's Frightful Presence, may now invoke Horror Token(s) on a failed saving throw.

Magic

Some spells that affect the mind in terrifying ways (e.g., Fear, Dissonant Whispers, etc.) may cause Horror Tokens on a failed saving throw (once per spell).

Other Sources

The DM may also rule that a character falling unconscious from reaching zero hit points also gains one or more Horror Tokens, as a response to the near-death experience. Be creative, but set expectations.

Horror Token Limit

The mind can only suppress so much before disturbing memories force themselves into conscious thought, whether that person is ready or not.

A character can have **no more than 5 Horror Tokens**. If any increase would push them over this limit, they immediately fall unconscious for 1d10 minutes, gain 1 Stress level, and remove all Horror Tokens.

This unconsciousness does not end by gaining hit points but can be ended with *Lesser* or *Greater Restoration*.

Game Balance

These rules influence the game, depending on how it's used, potentially changing the difficulty or how the players approach certain situations.

Each game table should therefore decide how much they want these mechanics to impact their game. Below are some suggested guidelines.

Horror Intensity

Consider using a soft limit to the number of Horrors the characters are subjected to between each Long Rest. A character may succeed on their saving throw against any and all Horrors they're subjected to.

Horror Intensity	Horrors per Long Rest
Mild	1
Medium	3
Severe	5
Nightmare*	7

**For any high intensity, the characters are expected to use Short Rest to remove Horror Tokens before they risk hitting the Horror Token Limit.*

The intensity can vary throughout the campaign, as the characters may reach areas with a stronger horror theme than others. How intense the campaign gets is, ultimately, up to each game table.

Encounter Difficulty

Consider using a soft limit to how many Horrors each character can be afflicted by, for any given encounter, based on that encounter's difficulty.

After a character has been afflicted by (i.e. failed their saving throw against) a number of Horrors equal to the encounter's limit, they do not gain any more Horror Tokens from that encounter, except by DM's discretion.

Encounter Difficulty	Horrors Afflicted per Encounter
Easy	0
Medium	1
Hard	2
Deadly	3

For identifying a combat encounter's difficulty, online tools such as Kobold Plus Fight Club are great for this.

Stress

Stress represents a character's mental stability, starting at 0 and going up to 6.

As the Stress level increases, characters suffer more severe penalties and madness at specific Stress levels (see below).

Stress Levels & Effects

Stress Level	Effect
0	*No Effect.*
1	-1 stress penalty.
2	-1 stress penalty. Gain a *Minor* Madness.
3	-2 stress penalty.
4	-2 stress penalty. Gain a *Major* Madness.
5	-3 stress penalty.
6	*Complete Unraveling!*

The stress penalty applies to all rolls made with the d20, as well as any DC from abilities or spells. However, it does *not* apply to a DC if what triggered it also requires an attack roll to succeed first, such as for the Battlemaster's Maneuvers.

Stress Checks

During moments of stillness and rest, the character's mind is left to process what they've endured. Welcomed or not, these memories demand attention, forcing the characters to confront their experiences.

Whenever a character with at least 1 Horror Token takes a Short or Long Rest, they must make a Stress Check. They roll a Wisdom ability check versus the DC, which is calculated as follows:

Stress Check DC = 10 + Horror Tokens

Regardless of the outcome, they remove all of their Horror Tokens. On a failure, the character gains one Stress level.

The DM may enforce a Stress Check outside of Short and Long Rests, if they believe the situation calls for it.

Mental Support. A character proficient in Insight or Medicine skills may assist one other character with their Stress check. That person makes a Wisdom (Medicine or Insight) check against the DC of the target's Stress check. If successful, the target has advantage on that Stress check.

Madness

Madness represents the psychological wounds left behind by a high Stress level. They are divided into

- *Minor* Madness - Changes in personality: quirks, phobias, compulsions or delusions.
- *Major* Madness - Reality breaks apart; or perhaps it was already broken, and it's only now can you see it.

Gaining Madness

A player character gains a Madness when their Stress is at a particular level. When this happens, roll **d20 + d10** and refer to either Madness list for more information.

Depending on play style, the player could be given the entire entry for the madness rolled, or the DM could provide tidbits over time, letting the player naturally discover how the madness is creeping into their mind.

A character may have several different madness effects at any time. However, the DM should be wary of any that seem contrary to each other or make roleplaying difficult or unpleasant to the player.

Curing Madness

When Stress decreases below where a Madness was gained, that Madness is immediately removed.

For example, if Major Madness was gained at Stress level 4, but the character's Stress goes back down to level 3, that Major Madness is cured immediately, while any Minor Madness from Stress level 2 remains.

Regaining Madness

If a character goes back up to a previous Stress level where they had gained a Madness earlier, the DM may pick one of the options below:

- **Persistent Madness:** The character gains the same Madness as before.
  - *"You feel it creeping back — like a shadow that never truly left your mind."*
- **Chaos Madness:** The character gains a new random Madness (roll again).
  - *"Madness is a shifting entity. It never returns the same way twice."*
- **Player-Driven Narrative:** Let players choose whether they regain the old Madness or acquire a new random one.
  - *"Your mind teeters on the edge of sanity. Do you feel the old madness creeping back, or is it something new this time?"*
- **Character-Driven Narrative:** The madness isn't rolled randomly, but rather decided based on what fits that player character best.
  - *"Something dark emerges from deep inside your mind and takes hold."*

Madness Powers

Each Madness has a specific power, made available to the character after they've stayed with the Madness for some time.

This power represents the person's willingness to embrace the madness, drawing some benefit from their new condition. While the suggested timeframe is around 24 to 48 hours, the DM may decide to grant the Madness Power earlier or later than this.

The DC of any spell or ability gained from a Madness Power is calculated as follows:

DC = 8 + Proficiency Bonus + Charisma mod. + Stress

Any spell acquired from a Madness Power doesn't require any components or spell slots to be cast.

Conditions

Some Madness effects add a new condition to the game.

New Condition: *Shackled*

If an attribute is Shackled, any d20 roll that relies on that attribute is made with disadvantage. Likewise, if you cast a spell using that attribute to determine the DC, targets roll with advantage on saving throws against it.

Mental Recovery

There are a few ways to reduce Stress.

Long Rest

Finishing a Long Rest in a safe environment reduces Stress level by 1.

Safe environments include settlements or magical sanctuaries (e.g., Mordekainen's Magnificent Mansion. A camp in the wild can be made safe with a sufficient Wisdom (Survival) check, per DM's discretion. A Long Rest interrupted by conflict or hostilities, such as combat, is no longer considered a safe environment.

If a character failed a Stress Check during the Long Rest, their Stress cannot be reduced for that rest.

Magic

Certain types of magic can also help reducing Stress:

- *Lesser Restoration* gains the option of removing 2d4 Horror Tokens from the target.
- *Greater Restoration* gains the option of reducing the target's Stress Level by 1 and removing all Horror Tokens from the target.

Complete Unraveling!

A player character who completely loses themselves to insanity, reaching Stress level 6, is doomed - they either die or suffer a fate worse than death. This might mean the character is now an NPC under the DM's control, or any quest to revive that character now requires unique hoops to jump through.

Feel free to use any of the ideas below, or make one up that fits your campaign and the character's journey.

1. **Recurring Villain.** The character takes on a dark persona, now working against the player characters in the future.
2. **Unspeakable Horror.** The character swells as eyes and tentacles sprout from its body. It turns into an aberrant monster and immediately turns hostile.
3. **Cultist Ritual.** A rift opens as a group of hooded humanoids immediately and irrevocably summon the character to them.
4. **Too mad for heaven.** Their mind implodes from sheer stress and the person dies. The gods consider their soul too eldritch for their planned afterlife and instead send them to the Far Realms.
5. **Impending Doom.** Inexplicably, their Stress level goes back to normal, and they continue to live for 2d10 hours, at which point their doom arrives.

Frights

Frights are resource-draining challenges – similar to traps or hazards – that specifically target the mind. They require characters to confront unspeakable terror or disturbing supernatural phenomena.

Determining the DC

All Frights require the target(s) to make a saving throw, and the attribute is always a mental attribute. Pick one you believe fits best:

- **Intelligence** - when knowledge or patterns become deeply disturbing (e.g. cosmic horror).
- **Wisdom** - when pure fear is overwhelming.
- **Charisma** - when your sense of self is challenged, such as possession, manipulation, and similar.

Note: for certain horror themes, such as body horror, you can consider using Constitution instead.

Refer to the *Monster Statistics by Challenge Rating* (DMG page XX) and find a DC that fits the party's difficulty level.

Immunities. Those immune to Fear cannot gain Horror Tokens based on fear, when Wisdom is the saving throw. However, they may still gain them from other other sources, when their mind detoriates (Intelligence) or they lose their sense of self (Charisma). Similarly, those with advantage on saving throws against charm effects are more resistant against those Horrors.

Additional Setbacks

Beyond Horror Tokens, failing a Fright save might impose further effects. These can be:

- Psychic damage,
- A curse that lasts until broken,
- Summoning a monster (e.g. Aberration, Undead),
- Temporary penalties (e.g. Minor Madness for 24 hours).

Mitigation Through Skills

Characters with knowledge of the occult or eldritch may attempt to identify or mitigate the Fright's effects. For example:

- **Arcana:** may reveal that a cursed relic can be safely handled if certain precautions are taken, like using a protective charm or ritual.
- **Religion:** may allow a character to recite a protective incantation that reduces the severity of the Fright's effect or temporarily suppresses it.
- **History:** may provide knowledge about the Fright's origin, the trigger mechanism or consequences.

Consider offering tiered outcomes: a moderate success might lower the number of tokens gained or reduce additional effects, while a critical success might prevent the Fright's impact entirely.

Sample Frights

Below are some examples of Frights for you to use:

Hag's Grimoire

An old tome made of darkwood and human skin.

Trigger: Anyone reading this book must make an Intelligence saving throw (DC 14) or gain 1 Horror Token and be cursed. The curse causes the target to be silenced, as the mouth grows shut.

Arcana or History (DC 15). A secret passphrase allows this book to be opened safely, but it needs to be spoken by a fey creature. Someone who knows Sylvan can discern the passphrase with an Investigation check (DC 20). This phrase also breaks this tome's curse.

Blackbeard's Trove

A chest full of gold and gems beckons any onlooker, if not for a faint whisper from within.

Trigger: When any creature takes something from the chest, Blackbeard and his crew appear (6 ghosts total) and attack. Any creature caught by surprise must make a Wisdom saving throw DC 15 or be Frightened of them, and gain 1 Horror Token. The saving throw can be repeated at the end of each turn to end the Frightened condition.

Arcana or Religion (DC 12). Adding a coin to the chest will summon Blackbeard's ghost, who will be friendly and offer a trade or quest. Completing the quest helps put Blackbeard to rest, ending this Fright permanently.

Halls of the Dread

A disturbing chant echoes through the 200 feet hallway.

Trigger: Anyone moving through this hallway must make a Charisma saving throw (DC 12), or take 2d8 psychic damage, gain 1 Horror Token, and be forced to walk back towards the hall's entrance. Repeat the saving throw each round, until the person is either dead or no longer inside the hallway.

History or Religion (DC 15). The ghostly chanting is an old psalm from a forgotten faith. Any creature who sings this song, while walking (not running) through the hall, can do so without having to make any saving throws.

Gameplay Examples

Here are some scenarios to better showcase the new mechanics.

The Haunted Library

Tessa, a halfling bard, explores a library with forbidden tomes. As she reads a particularly disturbing passage, she must make an Intelligence saving throw. Tessa narrowly fails and gains 1 Horror Token. Later, during a Short Rest, she makes a Stress Check and fails, causing her Stress to rise to level 1. She doesn't gain any Madness, yet she's still shaken from the encounter, and she feels uneasy whenever she's near that library.

The Cursed Mirror

Darien, a human wizard, investigates a cursed mirror reputed to reveal one's darkest self. When he gazes into it, he makes a Charisma saving throw and succeeds - he gains no Horror Tokens. The cursed relic grants him instead an eerie insight: a Minor Madness Power, that's available for 1 week. After this, he may decide to use the Cursed Mirror again, hoping he won't be disturbed by the dark secrets it may reveal about himself.

Terrifying Whispers

The gnome investigator Finoa finds the secret cult. The cultist leader casts Dissonant Whispers on her. She fails her saving throw by more than 10 and gains 2 Horror Token, in addition to the spell's effect. This pushes her Horror Tokens to 6, and she faints, increasing her Stress by 1 and removes all 6 Horror Tokens. When she awakes, she's captured and subjected to more horrors before escaping. The whispers haunt her in her sleep, she fails her next Stress check, raising her Stress level to 2, and gains a Minor Madness. On the next night, she's back in the cult, but now as a member.

The Dragon's Fury

Kheled, the dwarven ranger, and his allies ambush a red dragon. The dragon unleashes a terrifying roar through its Frightful Presence. Kheled fails his saving throw and gains 1 Horror Token. Later in combat, Kheled is struck and falls unconscious (zero hit points). The DM rules that this near-death experience inflicts 2 Horror Tokens to Kheled. He fails his next Stress check, and he gains a new temporary character flaw: he's now deathly afraid of creatures resembling dragons, like lizards.

Rowan's Madness

In the short story, Rowan escapes the catacombs. However, after witnessing the gruesome deaths of his companions, the DM consider this near party-kill is a severe Horror. He fails his Wisdom saving throw by 10 and more and gains 3 Horror Tokens (2+1). He takes a Short Rest to heal and must make a Stress Check, which he also fails. His Stress level goes up from level 1 to level 2, and he gains a Minor Madness.

Minor Madness

Here's the list of Minor Madness effects, according to the results of the Madness roll (d20 + d10).

Any spell gained from a Minor Madness Power is cast at **Level 2**, unless the spell is of a higher level.

2. *Dark Ruminations*

Too much time with your own thoughts tend to derail into vicious what-ifs and horrific imagined scenarios.

- **Penalty:** At the end of each Long Rest, after any Stress check, you gain 1 Horror Tokens.
- **Power:** Once per turn, when you hit with an attack roll, you can deal bonus psychic damage equal to your Horror Tokens.

3. *Echoing Whispers*

You occasionally hear voices whispering just behind your ear, but when you turn, there's nothing there.

- **Penalty:** You have disadvantage on concentration checks.
- **Power:** Once per Long Rest, you can cast Dissonant Whispers.

4. *Speak in Tongues*

Your mind is locked into a mysterious language.

- **Penalty:** You can only communicate in an uncommon language that you did not understand before (Aquan, Sylvan, etc.) per DM's discretion, although it may not be clear to you which language it is. Even telepathy or mind-reading cannot overcome this communication barrier. However, you still understand the languages you are proficient in, and you may share simple concepts such as "food" or "danger" through mime or similar. Additionally, any spells you cast with verbal components requires an Intelligence check DC 10 + Spell Level to not lose the spell.
- **Power:** Once per Long Rest, you can cast Comprehend Languages (not as ritual).

5. *Hollow Laughter*

You laugh uncontrollably at inappropriate times.

- **Penalty:** You have disadvantage on stealth and persuasion attempts. The DM may impose disadvantage on other ability checks, depending on the situation.
- **Power:** Once per Long Rest, you can cast Tasha's Hideous Laughter.

6. *Floor is Lava*

Environmental hazards seem to be all around you.

- **Penalty:** During combat (and moments of stress) 3 tiles within 30 feet (as decided by the DM) seem hazardous to you: erupting flames, toxic gas, etc. In reality, these are illusions that only you see. If you pass into or through these tiles, you take 9 (2d8) psychic damage (once per turn). The tile locations may change (at the DM's discretion) at the start of each new round of combat.
- **Power:** Once per Long Rest, you can cast Hellish Rebuke.

7. *Hated Foe*

You are consumed by a compulsion to punish those who wrong you, real or perceived.

- **Penalty:** At the start of each combat, you find an inexplicable hatred for one of your enemies (as decided by the DM). As long as that foe is not incapacitated, you have disadvantage on your attack rolls against other targets. Saving throws for other enemies have advantage against your spell DC, unless it's an area of effect.
- **Power:** Once per Long Rest, you can cast Compelled Duel.

8. *Flickering Light*

The light around you seems to flicker unnaturally, sometimes changing to a sinister darker hue.

- **Penalty:** Only you can see this, and it affects your ability to see in the dark: bright light becomes dim light, dim light becomes darkness, and darkness is treated as magical darkness.
- **Power:** Once per Long Rest, you can cast Faerie Fire.

9. *Heightened Senses*

Your senses are overwhelmed. Loud noises or bright lights cause you to flinch; you are blinded by bright light

- **Penalty:** You have disadvantage on saving throws against spells or effects dealing Thunder or Radiant damage.
- **Power:** You gain blindsight 10 feet.

10. *Unnatural Bliss*

Your worries drift away as you lean into a relaxed state of mind, even in the face of danger, as you can't seem to take them serious. You may have found an unreal sense of optimism, or perhaps you no longer believe that the world around you is real anymore.

- **Penalty:** You have disadvantage on saving throws against traps and environmental hazards.
- **Power:** Once per Long Rest, you can cast Calm Emotions.

11. *Searing Taste*

Everything tastes foul, even water.

- **Penalty:** You must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution save to eat or drink without feeling ill, including potions. In case of a failure, you are Poisoned for 1d4 hours. You can repeat this saving throw every hour to end the Poisoned condition.
- **Power:** While you are Poisoned, you can cast the Acid Splash cantrip, as you spit or otherwise spray acid from your body.

12. *Prideful Isolation*

You refuse to accept aid, believing yourself above others and the tools they use.

- **Penalty:** As a result, you cannot receive the Help action, while conscious, although you can use it on others. Healing received through potions or from spells cast by others heal you for only half the effect (rounded down).
- **Power:** Once per turn, whenever you deal psychic damage to another creature, you restore your hit points equal to your Charisma modifier, but never more than the damage dealt.

13. *Sympathetic Wounds*

The hardship of others strongly affect your own well-being, as you experience their pain.

- **Penalty:** Whenever an ally within 30 feet of you (that you can see or hear) takes 10 or more damage from a single source (attack, spell, trap, etc.), you take 2 psychic damage. This damage only occurs once per turn and cannot be resisted.
- **Power:** Power: Once per Long Rest, you can cast Warding Bond.

14. *Bleeding Surfaces*

You see blood emanating from walls, floor and ceilings.

- **Penalty:** This is an illusion effect and distorts your ability to find and follow tracks. You have disadvantage on Investigation, Perception and Survival checks.
- **Power:** Once per Long Rest, you can cast the *Blood Bath* spell (see *Spells*).

15. *Fragmented Identity*

You immediately gain one or more personality traits (trait, ideal, bond or flaw), as chosen by the DM.

- **Penalty:** Some of your behavior and memories are likely altered, in order for you to justify this new side of yourself.
- **Power:** Once per Long Rest, you can cast Blur.

16. *Overthinker*

You are easily overwhelmed by options in front of you, making it hard to decide how to act going forward.

- **Penalty:** You have disadvantage on Initiative checks. Also, until you act in the first round of combat, you're considered surprised, even if you normally cannot be surprised.
- **Power:** Once per Long Rest, you can cast Enhance Ability.

17. *Mind Teller*

Your nervousness make you think aloud to yourself, leading to oversharing your thoughts with other people using your telepathy.

- **Penalty:** Whenever you fail a charisma check with an NPC, you must make an Intelligence saving throw DC 12. On a failure, that NPC can now instantly start reading your mind, as if given the effect of Detect Thoughts with you as their only target.
- **Power:** You gain Telepathy (30 ft.).

18. *Unbidden Meekness*

You become full of guilt and shyness, apologizing whenever possible.

- **Penalty:** You have disadvantage on deception, intimidation and performance checks.
- **Power:** Once per Long Rest, you can cast Invisibility.

19. *Burning Jealousy*

The success of others makes you feel inadequate, and it's revolting. You don't need be great, as long as they are worse.

- **Penalty:** Whenever an ally that you can see lands a critical hit, incapacitates an enemy, or otherwise achieves some major success without your direct involvement (DM's discretion), you become Poisoned until the end of your next turn.
- **Power:** Once per round, whenever an ally you can see rolls a natural 1 on an attack roll, ability check or saving throw, you gain temporary hit points equal to twice your Proficiency Bonus.

20. *Thoughts and Prayers*

You've found faith in something previously unheard of, believing yourself to be its prophet. You can choose whatever the faith entails, including any dogma, target of worship, and more. Nothing can turn you away from this faith.

- **Penalty:** Whenever you attempt to cast a spell, there's a 50% chance that you lose the spell, as you attempt to invoke the magic through your new faith, and nothing happens. Spells gained from Madness cannot be lost this way.
- **Power:** Once per Long Rest, you can cast Augury.

21. *Withering Bones*

You believe you are very old or frail.

- **Penalty:** Your movement speed is halved (rounded up).
- **Power:** Once per Long Rest, you can cast Ray of Enfeeblement.

22. *Ravenous Void*

An endless hunger gnaws at you, making it hard to satisfy your craving.

- **Penalty:** Short Rests provide no benefit for you, unless you consume food and drinks equal to a full day's ration. Long Rests require twice as much. You must still make a Stress check if you partake in any Rest, benefits or not. On a full day, you must consume at least three day's rations of food and drinks or gain one level of Exhaustion.
- **Power:** Once per Long Rest, you can cast Hunger of Hadar.

23. *Haunting Suspicion*

You trust no one, including your companions.

- **Penalty:** You can no longer use or receive the Help action while you are conscious. Furthermore, no one but yourself count as an ally for the sake of your abilities, spells and effects.
- **Power:** Once per Long Rest, you can cast Enemies Abound.

24. *Hollowed Spirit*

You have a strong sense of unending boredom or tiredness.

- **Penalty:** You suffer a 1d4 penalty to all attack rolls, ability checks and saving throws.
- **Power:** Once per Long Rest, you can cast Slow.

25. *Compulsive Assistance*

You feel compelled to "help" others but often make things worse.

- **Penalty:** Whenever a nearby ally attempts a practical ability check, roll a d20. On a 1-4, you interfere and impose disadvantage, unless you are physically prevented from interfering.
- **Power:** Once per Long Rest, you can cast Haste.

26. *Glittering Greed*

You are enthralled by money or anything particularly shiny, believing them to be incredibly valuable.

- **Penalty:** While in presence of such things, you must make a Wisdom saving throw DC 12. On a failure, you quickly lose interest in most anything else, focusing instead on how to acquire these. On a success, you only suffer a -10 penalty to Intelligence (Investigation) and Wisdom (Perception) checks. These effects lasts until the perceived valuables are either acquired or until you are no longer in their presence.
- **Power:** Once per Long Rest, you can cast Hypnotic Pattern.

27. *Truth Aversion*

You are compelled to lie, even to your allies.

- **Penalty:** Your stories become increasingly bizarre and unbelievable, as you embellish and they become more extreme. Eventually, you may start to believe these stories yourself.
- **Power:** Once per Long Rest, you can cast Conjure Barrage.

28. *The Stalker*

You feel constantly pursued by an unseen force. You hear the pounding footsteps of a predator that never arrives.

- **Penalty:** When traveling, your group's pace is halved unless you lead a "flight" march at the risk of exhaustion.
- **Power:** Once per Long Rest, you can cast Pass without Trace.

29. *Childish*

You behave like a child, avoiding danger and seeking comfort.

- **Penalty:** You have disadvantage on saving throws against fear or charm effects.
- **Power:** Once per Long Rest, you can cast Protection from Evil and Good.

30. *Hero Complex*

You believe yourself to be the incarnation of a legendary hero - whether real, forgotten, or entirely fabricated.

- **Penalty:** You have disadvantage to stealth checks, as your heroic ego prevents you from staying quiet.
- **Power:** On the first round of combat, you may spend an Action to loudly declare your presence, issue a challenge, or deliver a battle cry. If you do, you are affected as if by the Heroism spell, without requiring concentration, until end of combat. The effect ends early unless you spend all your movement to move directly toward an enemy, end your turn adjacent to an enemy, or spend an Action to repeat your bravado.

Major Madness

Here's the list of Major Madness effects, according to the results of the Madness roll (d20 + d10).

Any spell gained from a Major Madness Power is cast at **Level 6**, unless the spell is of a higher level.

2. *The Squid Cat*

The Squid Cat is a cosmic being of mischief that feeds from various forms of madness. It visits the planes in hunt for sustenance and play. Once it finds someone, it stays with them until there's no more madness to feed from; either the madness is cured or the victim dies.

The Squid Cat may cause anything from a minor inconvenience to real mischief: pushing breakable things down from shelves, bite your toes during an important meeting, or make any other cat-like prank. Although it may find enjoyment in toying with other creatures in your vicinity, these pranks are almost always at your expense.

Since the Squid Cat is a unique NPC, only one character can be affected by this Madness.

- **Penalty:** At DM's discretion, the Squid Cat can apply disadvantage to any ability check you make, but never more than once per minute. If attacked, the Squid Cat vanishes in an inky cloud, only to reappear whenever and wherever it feels like. The Squid Cat is invulnerable to damage and immune to all status effects, yet it has no interest in direct lethal action against its psychological prey.
- **Power:** Once per Long Rest, you can convince the Squid Cat to take your side by casting Summon Fiend (always Yugoloth type). When the spell ends, the Squid Cat gets bored and goes back to tormenting you.

3. *Flickering Reality*

You occasionally see "glitches" in your surroundings: looping doorways, duplicate persons, or flickering objects. You occasionally hesitate in movement or interaction as you process these distortions.

- **Penalty:** At the start of every combat round, roll a d6 and check the table below (lasts until end of round).

Flickering Reality - Random Glitch

D6 Roll	Effect
1	Time seems to stand still before skipping forward without warning. *You cannot take Reactions.*
2	Movements create ghostly afterimages. *Enemies have advantage on saving throws against your spells and abilities.*
3	Phantom images appear of people that aren't really there. *You have disadvantage on attack rolls.*
4	The floor beneath you distorts, making footing uncertain. *Your movement speed is halved.*
5 - 6	Reality stabilizes briefly. *No penalty.*

- **Power:** Once per Long Rest, you can manipulate reality for 3 rounds. For the duration:
  - You ignore all penalties from this Madness.
  - You can see and target anything within 60 feet, even if your attack, spell, or ability would normally have a shorter range (unless the target is invisible to you by other means than line-of-sight). You ignore all cover.
  - As a Reaction, you can distort a single attack, spell, or ability you see within 60 feet, redirecting its target to anything or anyone within range (after the roll but before any damage or effect is applied).
  - As part of your movement, you may freely teleport to anywhere within 60 feet, once.

4. *Void Gaze*

Your eyes glaze over and become milky white, giving you limited but spiritual sight.

- **Penalty:** You gain blindsight 30 feet (blind beyond this range). This blindness cannot be removed, as long as you are affected by this Madness.
- **Power:** Through your blindsight, creatures appear as twisted, symbolic distortions of themselves. For example, illusory coins may bleed out of the eyes of someone greedy. You can make a Wisdom (Insight) check against a creature's Charisma (Deception) to uncover personality characteristics, determined randomly or by DM's choice: trait, ideal, bond or flaw. Furthermore, you can determine immediately if their soul is missing (undead or construct), fractured (aberrant) or corrupted (curse or madness). You cannot be surprised by creatures within your Blindsight range.

5. *Aberrant Spirit*

Your soul is strongly connected to the Far Realm.

- **Penalty:** You have disadvantage against, and can be subjected to, spells that affect summons and otherworldly beings, such as Banishment. On rare occasions, you may vanish suddenly for up to 1 hour before reappearing again (DM's discretion), as if being temporarily summoned elsewhere. You have no memory of being away.
- **Power:** You can connect to an ally, granting them the ability to cast Summon Aberration once per Long Rest. If they cast the spell this way, you are the aberration they summon, teleported to the spell's location as the Aberrant Spirit. You use the statistics of the summoned monster for the spell's duration. When the spell ends, you return to the form you had before the spell was cast, at a random location near your connected ally. You remember very little from being summoned this way.

6. *Eldritch Sleepwalker*

You sometimes fall through wormholes of the universe.

- **Penalty:** At the end of each Long Rest, you must succeed on a DC 12 Charisma saving throw or wake up 1d4 miles away in a random direction. No amount of preparation can keep you from moving this way and, sometimes, you may wake up in areas you really shouldn't be able to enter.
- **Power:** Once per Long Rest, you can cast Arcane Gate.

7. *Repulsive*

Being near other people makes you incredible uncomfortable, and a mere physical touch creates a surge of pain.

- **Penalty:** You cannot willingly touch another creature. One per turn, if another creature willingly touches you, they deal 1d6 psychic damage to you.
- **Power:** You are resistant to psychic damage. Whenever a creature deals psychic damage to you, that creature takes the same amount of psychic damage that you do.

8. *Dark Brooding*

Your demeanor shifts to a sullen and negative behavior, making creatures uneasy around you.

- **Penalty:** All creatures within 10 feet of you (including yourself) cannot gain temporary hit points and has disadvantage to death saving throws.
- **Power:** Once per Long Rest, you can cast Shadow of Moil.

9. *Temporal Slips*

You sometimes skip forward into the future, vanishing before reappearing shortly after. While away, you experience a potential (sometimes absurd) continuation of where you were, as if you never left, which may confuse your understanding of your current timeline.

- **Penalty:** If you roll a natural 3 or lower on a d20, you are banished (similar to the Banishment spell) immediately after the outcome of that roll. If it's your turn in combat, your turn ends immediately, and you return at the start of your next turn.
- **Power:** Once per Long Rest, you can cast Foresight as a Bonus Action, except this casting only targets yourself and last for 1 minute. During this time, you don't skip into the future.

10. *Heavy Spasms*

Your muscles refuse to act as you wish, sometimes contracting at inopportune times in painful convulsions.

- **Penalty:** As a result, your Strength is Shackled and your speed is reduced by 10 feet.
- **Power:** Once per Long Rest, you can unleash the electrical charges in your body to cast Chain Lightning.

11. *Creepy Crawlers*

Your insides itch constantly, making it hard for you to keep a steady hand.

- **Penalty:** Your Dexterity is Shackled and your AC is reduced by 2.
- **Power:** Once per Long Rest, you can cast Insect Plague, as insects and vermin crawl out of your orifices.

12. *Aberrant Flesh*

You feel a deep disturbance within you, making it hard to connect who you are with what you are.

- **Penalty:** Your Constitution is Shackled and you regain only half hit points from spending Hit Dice on Short Rests.
- **Power:** Once per Long Rest, you can turn into an Aberrant Spirit (as if you cast Polymorph on yourself).

13. *Deep Echo*

You feel compelled to repeat what others do and say, making it hard to make up your own mind.

- **Penalty:** Your Intelligence is Shackled, and any ability checks using Intelligence takes twice as long.
- **Power:** Once per Short Rest, when you succeed on a saving throw against an ability or a single-target spell, you can use a reaction to immediately repeat that effect onto another target within range. You use the original user's DC if it's higher than yours. Any spell cast this way is considered part of the Madness Power.

14. *Into Oblivion*

Your become preoccupied by constant shadowy visions of terrors around you, and you seem to lose contact with your immediate environment.

- **Penalty:** Your Wisdom is Shackled (except for Stress checks) and you are considered blind beyond 60 feet.
- **Power:** Once per Long Rest, you can summon some of these shadows to assist, by casting Spiritual Weapon.

15. *Primordial Song*

You feel compelled to always speak in rhymes. However, your voice has an uncomfortable lilt to it that deters other creatures.

- **Penalty:** Your Charisma is Shackled, and most strangers initially respond with unfriendliness - perhaps even hostility - towards you.
- **Power:** Once per day, you may cast the Song of the Primordial spell.

16. *Jinx*

Your mere presence brings eerie bad luck to yourself and those around you.

- **Penalty:** When you roll a 4 or lower on the d20, it's treated as a natural 1. You cannot reroll a natural 1 on the d20, except by using Inspiration.
- **Power:** Once per Short Rest, you can spend your Reaction on a creature you can see within 120 feet that makes an attack roll, ability check or saving throw. That roll is now treated as a natural 1.

17. *Manifested Haunting*

Your nightmares take physical form.

- **Penalty:** Roll a d6 at the start of each Long Rest. On a 1, a hostile monster appears and attacks you. If it does, that Long Rest no longer has a safe environment. The monster is an aberration or undead chosen by the DM, such as the following: Shadow (CR 1/2), Ghibbering Mouther (CR 2), Ghost (CR 4) or Otyugh (CR 5).
- **Power:** Once per Long Rest, you can tap into other people's nightmares by casting Phantasmal Killer.

18. *Temper Tantrum*

You feel an immense anger build up inside you, ready to lash out at anyone who dares to slight or hurt you.

- **Penalty:** In combat, if anyone has damaged you since your last turn, you must attempt to harm any creatures that damaged you. Once you have damaged them, you can otherwise act freely. If no one damaged you since your last turn, you can act freely.
- **Power:** Once per Long Rest, you can cast Circle of Death, allowing your anger to viciously radiate around you.

19. *Blind Love*

You experience a powerful affection towards particularly charismatic individuals.

- **Penalty:** You immediately fall in love with the first humanoid you meet with the highest Charisma score so far (must be NPC). You act as if charmed by that person. If you meet another humanoid with an even higher Charisma score, you discard the previous affection in favor of the new one. This charm can be broken similar to a Charm Person spell. If broken, you are immune to this penalty for 1d4 hours, after which the Charisma score threshold resets and you'll likely find a new target for your affection.
- **Power:** Once per Long Rest, you can cast Eyebite.

20. *Lorded by Dance*

You feel compelled to dance in any tense situation.

- **Penalty:** In combat, arguments or moments of danger, you must move at least 10 feet every turn, even if it provokes attacks of opportunity.
- **Power:** Once per Long Rest, you can cast Otto's Irresistible Dance.

21. *Universal Friendship*

The world is all colors and rainbows for you.

- **Penalty:** You cannot willingly attack creatures that haven't yet attempted to harm you or your allies.
- **Power:** Once per Long Rest, you can cast Charm Monster.

22. *Invisible "Friend"*

You find yourself a new companion who's cool and tells you so many smart things. The odd thing is, no one else can see them! The problem begins when this "friend" ask of you things that you may not be comfortable with.

- **Penalty:** Your Invisible Friend sometimes asks you to do certain things (e.g. steal something, insult an NPC, use different equipment in combat). If you refuse, you feel bad and gain 1 Horror Token.
- **Power:** Once per Long Rest, you can call upon your friend as a spirit under your control, as you cast Conjure Fey. The spirit is visible to its enemies only, so that it cannot benefit from being invisible. The enemies never agree on what the spirit looks like, making wild and contrary descriptions, if any.

23. *Selective Memory*

You have a tendency to misremember things, drawing the wrong conclusions as to what has happened. This means that your goals may sometimes be skewed from those of your companions.

- **Penalty:** The DM may occasionally give you a side-quest, similar to the *Geas* spell.
- **Power:** Once per Long Rest, you can enforce your selective memory to draw other people into your skewed world view by casting Modify Memory (up to 7 days ago).

24. *Wild Eldritch*

You magic, regardless of its origin, suddenly connects to the Far Realm, calling upon eldritch and volatile powers.

- **Penalty:** Once per turn, the DM can have you roll a d10 immediately after you cast a spell of 1st level or higher. If you roll a 1, roll on the Eldritch Event table. The event takes place at the target location of your spell. If the event requires an unoccupied space, and the space is already occupied, it targets the nearest unoccupied space instead.
- **Power:** Once per Long Rest, you can cause a Large Eldritch Event at a target location within 60 feet. You are immune to any harmful effects from it. If anything is summoned, you control it for the duration - it acts after you on your initiative.

25. *Evil Twin*

You no longer cast a shadow. Instead, a darker version of yourself lurks behind you that's only visible in mirrors or other reflections.

- **Penalty:** When your hit points fall to half or lower, your shadow is released and goes berserk for 1 minute. For its duration, you are affected by the Fire Shield spell (chill shield) and, at the end of each of your turns, you must make a Wisdom saving throw DC 15. On a failure, the shadow forces you to move up to your movement speed and attack one random creature (even allies). This forced movement may provoke opportunity attacks.
- **Power:** After each Long Rest, you're affected by Death Ward that, if triggered, releases your shadow that relentlessly attacks whichever creature triggered it until that target is dead (if any) or until you are incapacitated (up to 1 minute). Also, whenever the shadow is released, you gain 2d10 temporary hit points, which are lost when the shadow goes dormant again.

26. *Dark Blood*

Your veins turn dark, filled with a viscous, shifting and contagious liquid.

- **Penalty:** Whenever you take piercing or slashing damage, you take an additional 1d6 necrotic damage as black goo sprays from your wound. If the attacker is within 5 feet of you, they take 1d6 necrotic damage and must make a Constitution saving throw. Those immune to necrotic damage automatically succeed. On a failure, they gain Dark Blood (as a disease, not madness) and can repeat this saving throw every 10 minutes to end the effect.
- **Power:** Once per Long Rest, you can cast Contagion.

27. *Dark Restraints*

You are haunted by an unseen force that despises your freedom. It lurks at the edge of reality, waiting for moments of weakness to tighten its grip.

- **Penalty:** Whenever you become restrained, grappled or incapacitated, the world seems to shift against you - chains that weren't there a moment ago slither around your limbs, unseen hands grasp your throat. You gain 1 Horror Token whenever this happens, but never more often than once per minute.
- **Power:** Once per Long Rest, you can cast Contingency.

28. *Loathsome Limbs*

You sometimes lose your feeling in your limbs or feel a prickly sensation through them. Sometimes you lose even more.

- **Penalty:** Whenever you take at least 15 Slashing damage at once, roll a d20 to determine what else happens to you:

d20	Effect
1 - 10	Nothing else happens.
11 - 15	One *leg* is severed from you (if any remain).
16 - 20	One *arm* is severed from you (if any remain).

Severed limbs don't bleed but remain alive for 1 minute, twitching or crawling toward you. Missing limbs limits your ability to function: speed is reduced by half for each missing leg; each arm lost means that arm cannot be used (such as for two-handed weapons).

- **Power:** Once per Long Rest, you may cast Regenerate. For every 15 hit points the spell restores, one missing limb or body part regrows. Also, while affected by Regenerate, you may use 1 Action to press a severed limb to its stump, instantly reattaching it.

29. *The Masquerade*

You see everyone in a mask, believing all interactions are part of a grand social performance - you partake and revel in it.

- **Penalty:** You have problems recognizing anyone who isn't another player character, and you cannot determine when someone is lying.
- **Power:** Once per Long Rest, you can cast Mass Suggestion, making them believe they are playing a role of your choice, as if you momentarily took control of the masquerade's narrative.

30. *Alien Physique*

Tentacles. More tentacles.

- **Penalty:** A tentacle grows out from your body that you cannot control - it has a mind of its own. After every Long Rest, roll a d6 to determine which attribute is Shackled. This lasts until the next time you roll.
- **Power:** Once per Long Rest, you can cast Aberrant Mutation, during which you are no longer Shackled from this madness and can control all your tentacles.

Spells

Aberrant Mutation

Level 4 Transmutation

- **Casting Time:** 1 action
- **Range:** Self
- **Duration:** 1 minute

For the duration, you gain two tentacles and the multiattack Action to attack using any tentacles you have. You can use either your Strength or spellcasting attribute for the attack roll. On hit, a tentacle deals 1d6 bludgeoning plus 1d6 psychic damage plus the attribute's modifier.

As part of casting this spell, you may choose to burrow any number of your tentacles into the ground and have them reappear at any unoccupied spaces within 30 feet of you. These tentacles are considered Eldritch Event (medium) Tentacles under your control and act on your turn. On later turns, you can spend an Action or Bonus Action to retract or move your summoned tentacles. Any destroyed tentacles summoned this way grow back at the end of your next turn.

While you have one tentacle burrowed, your speed becomes 0. While you have two or more tentacles burrowed, you are considered restrained and have advantage against being forcefully moved. Should you be forcefully moved, any burrowed tentacles are immediately retracted.

Blood Bath

Level 3 Transmutation

- **Casting Time:** 1 action
- **Range:** 150 feet
- **Target:** A 20-foot radius centered on a point within range
- **Duration:** Concentration, up to 10 minute

A thick and gooey crimson emanates from the surface and rises about 4 feet up inside the spell's area, which becomes difficult terrain for the duration. You can attempt to restrain any number of targets within the area, as the blood coagulates around them. The targets make a Dexterity saving throw (must be of Large size or smaller size) and is restrained on a failed check. A creature restrained by this spell can use its Action to make a Strength check against your spell save DC to break free.

On subsequent turns, you can spend an Action to repeat the restrain attempt again. Any creature that takes damage while inside the area takes an additional 1d8 poison damage.

Song of the Primordial

Level 6 Enchantment

- **Casting Time:** 1 action
- **Range:** 30 feet
- **Duration:** Concentration, up to 1 minute

You channel a twisted and eldritch song that pierces the mind of those around you. Each creature in the area who hear the song must make an Intelligence saving throw. On a failed save, the creature takes 4d8 psychic damage and is stunned until the end of their next turn. On a successful save, the creature takes half damage and suffers no other effect. On each of your turns for the duration, you can use your Action to continue the song. The spell ends if you use your Action to do anything else.

Aberrant creatures, or those with an Intelligence score of 2 or lower, are unaffected.

Eldritch Events

These are events that might occur near corrupted areas, eldritch monsters or where dark powers are used.

In this document, it's only applied for a particular Madness (Major #24: *Wild Eldritch*), but they could be used for anything else that fits the theme and situation.

d10	Eldritch Size
1 - 4	Small
5 - 8	Medium
9 - 10	Large

d20	Eldritch Type
1 - 5	Summon Tentacle
6 - 9	Black Hole
10 - 13	Reality Fracture
14 - 16	Blood Rain
17 - 19	Shifting Silence
20	Eye of the Void

Summon Tentacle

A worm-like appendage breaks out of a nearby surface and starts thrashing around indiscriminately.

The tentacle attacks a random creature within range, except for aberrations or other tentacles. It has combat statistics depending on its size. Any creature it hits - of the same size or smaller - is automatically grappled by the tentacle. DC to escape the grapple is equal to its AC.

The tentacle lasts for 1 minute or until destroyed.

Size	AC	HP	Reach	Attack	Damage
Small	10	10	5 ft.	+4	2d4 + 4
Medium	14	15	5 ft.	+8	2d6 + 6
Large	18	20	10 ft.	+12	2d8 + 8

Black Hole

Dark energies emanate from a point that drags all nearby objects and creatures towards its center.

All creatures within range must make a Strength saving throw or be pulled 5 feet towards the hole and suffer force damage. A successful save halves this damage and negates the pull. Any unattended small or loose items are pulled towards its center.

The effect is instantaneous and disappears after.

Size	Range	DC	Damage
Small	10 ft. radius	12	2d8
Medium	15 ft. radius	16	3d8
Large	20 ft. radius	18	4d8

Reality Fracture

Space itself splinters and rearranges, creating brief glimpses into impossible, shifting landscapes.

The area is considered difficulty terrain. Creatures inside have a 50% chance to become briefly ethereal at the end of their turn, as if affected by Blink.

The effect lasts for 3 rounds.

Size	Area (radius)
Small	10 ft.
Medium	15 ft.
Large	20 ft.

Blood Rain

A thick, viscous rain begins to fall, staining the ground and flesh alike. The air reeks of iron and decay.

Initially, the rain provides profane healing to any creature who ends their turn there. At the end of the third round, the blood rain turns acidic and wounds anyone inside.

Size	Round 1 (healing)	Round 2 (healing)	Round 3 (damage)
Small	2d8 hit points	2d4 hit points	2d8 acid
Medium	3d8 hit points	3d4 hit points	3d8 acid
Large	4d8 hit points	4d4 hit points	4d8 acid

Shifting Silence

All sound is swallowed into the void, creating an eerie, soundless battlefield. Weapons swing noiselessly, arrows fly without a whisper, and even the screams of the dying are stolen.

For 1 minute, the area is treated as if a *Silence* spell affects it.

Size	Area (radius)
Small	10 ft.
Medium	20 ft.
Large	30 ft.

Eye of the Void

A vast, staring eye winks into existence, its pupil shifting like black smoke. Reality distorts under its gaze, and those who meet its sight feel as though their thoughts are no longer their own.

While in the area, any creature must make a Charisma saving throw at the start of their turn, or immediately become affected as if by the *Confusion* spell until the start of their next turn. Blind and aberrant creatures are immune to this effect.

Anyone may choose to avert or close their eyes in order to avoid the effect, but they'll be considered blind until the start of their next turn.

The Eye of the Void remains for 3 rounds. After it leaves, anyone who failed a saving throw against it receives a random Minor Madness for 24 hours.

Size	Area (radius)	DC
Small	20 ft.	12
Medium	30 ft.	15
Large	40 ft.	18

Horror Tone Guide

Horror games should be thrilling, not distressing. No one should have to force themselves through discomfort, when the goal is to have fun.

This guide provides tools and recommendations to ensure that everyone enjoys the game experience in a way that is safe, respectful, and immersive.

Setting Expectations

Before starting a campaign, it is highly recommended that the group has a Session Zero to discuss boundaries and expectations.

This is usually the time when players create new characters, and the relations between them and the campaign are established.

This is a good time for everyone to agree on house rules, who brings snacks, how often or long do you plan to play, and what topics everyone are comfortable with.

For the horror genre, these are some topics that may be covered during a Session Zero:

- **Consent & Comfort Levels**
  - What horror elements excite the group?
  - Are there any topics that should be avoided?
  - What themes are acceptable but should be handled with care?
- **Tone & Severity**
  - Is the game meant to be lightly eerie, unsettling, or deeply horrifying?
  - Should madness effects be temporary, permanent, or optional for some players?
  - Will stress and madness be used mechanically, narratively, or both?
- **Player Communication**
  - Are players comfortable with surprises, or should horror elements be foreshadowed?
  - What signals (e.g., safety tools) can players use to express discomfort?
  - Is everyone aware they can pause, discuss, or adjust the game at any time?

Safety Tools

Here are some social safety tools you may consider using at your game table:

Safe-Card

Players can tap the card or say the card's safe word if a scene is uncomfortable or needs to fade to black. No explanations needed.

Lines & Veils

- **Lines:** Hard boundaries - topics that will not appear in the game.
- **Veils:** Topics that can exist but will be faded out or implied rather than described. (Example: "Torture is a common Veil; one may know that it happens but any description is without details.")

Open Door Policy

Anyone can step away or pause the game at any time without needing to explain. The goal is for everyone to have fun, not endure discomfort.

Horror as a Storytelling Tool

In many horror games, "insanity" is portrayed as a detriment that only makes characters weaker. Instead, consider it something that helps drive the narrative.

Themes & Considerations

The following themes may appear in various forms of horror. They can be adjusted, minimized, or avoided as needed, to ensure that your campaign can best suit the preferences of your players.

Psychological Horror

Characters will experience severe mental strain, uncertainty, and surreal distortions of reality. Their minds may betray them, leaving them unsure of what is real and what is a lie.

- **Suggested Themes:** Unreliable memories, hallucinations, paranoia, reality glitches, intrusive thoughts, and loss of identity.
- **Content Adjustments:** You may want to refrain from using real-world medical terms, to avoid stigma. You can instead frame psychological horror in a vague or supernatural way (e.g., someone having "The Whispers" or "a fractured perception").

Examples in media

- *Silent Hill / The Lighthouse* – Perceptions of reality distort into something nightmarish.
- *Fight Club / The Machinist* – The protagonist's own mind is their greatest enemy.
- *Jacob's Ladder / Event Horizon* – Trauma manifests as hallucinations and impossible imagery.

Game Ideas

- A character's memories don't align with reality. Did they ever truly exist?
- Time shifts, locations loop, or the world subtly changes without explanation.
- An NPC has been "missing" for weeks but the players swear they just saw them yesterday.

Cosmic Horror & the Unknown

The universe is vast, uncaring, and filled with things beyond mortal comprehension. The horror doesn't just come from terrifying creatures - it's the knowledge that nothing makes sense anymore. Reality is fragile, and the more you seek to understand, the more you risk losing your mind.

- **Suggested Themes:** Fear of the unknown, incomprehensible truths, existential dread, forbidden knowledge, and cosmic insignificance.
- **Content Adjustments:** Some players prefer paranoia-driven storytelling, while others enjoy a more heroic horror experience.

Examples in media

- *The Call of Cthulhu* – The more you understand, the worse it gets.
- *Annihilation* – Unnatural environments defy the laws of reality.

Game Ideas

- A book whispers truths that no mortal should ever hear.
- The laws of physics begin to unravel in subtle ways.
- An NPC warns the party: "If you look at it, it will notice you."

Body Horror & Transformation

The horror of the flesh itself - your body is no longer yours, changing in ways you can't control. Mutation, corruption, and forced transformation are common tropes in eldritch horror, emphasizing the loss of humanity.

- **Suggested Themes:** Shifting flesh, unnatural appendages, parasitic infestations, psychic warping, and inhuman perception.
- **Content Adjustments:** If body horror is uncomfortable, limit graphic descriptions or use more abstract, symbolic or dreamlike distortions instead.

Examples in media

- *The Fly / The Thing* – Horrific mutations that blur the line between human and monster.
- *Akira / Tetsuo: The Iron Man* – Uncontrolled transformations and grotesque growths.
- *Alien* – Parasitic organisms that infiltrate the body.

Game Ideas

- A character's reflection no longer matches their body.
- A wound begins to move, and something is growing inside.
- A player sprouts an extra limb but is it truly theirs?

Loss of Control & Helplessness

There is no escape, no way to fight back, and no one will help you. This theme explores moments when players lose agency due to supernatural forces, external manipulation, or overwhelming odds.

- **Suggested Themes:** Mind control, possession, paralysis, forced servitude, or an unkillable pursuer.
- **Content Adjustments:** Use loss of control sparingly - losing control should be terrifying, but not frustrating. Instead, give players choices even within forced actions (e.g., "You must attack, but how?"). Provide ways for characters to push back against external control.

Examples in Horror Media

- *The Shining / The Exorcist* - A malevolent force twists the mind against itself.
- *The Blair Witch Project* - Escape is impossible.
- *It Follows* - No matter what you do, it keeps coming.

Game Ideas

- Stuck inside an underground dungeon or taken captive by an Aboleth. How can they escape?
- A foe is immune to all damage. How do they fight something they cannot hurt?

Systemic Horror

The true terror isn't an individual monster - it's an oppressive system too vast to fight. Characters struggle against an overwhelming, impersonal force: a corrupt government, an unfeeling bureaucracy, a society that punishes dissent.

- **Suggested Themes:** Corrupt institutions, dystopian laws, bureaucracy gone mad, mass surveillance, and a world designed to break people.
- **Content Adjustments:** Avoid real-world political debates that cause division among the players. Focus instead on existential dread - the horror of being just another cog in the machine. Let players experience moments of defiance and rebellion rather than pure helplessness.

Examples in Horror Media

- *1984 / Brazil* - A system that controls every aspect of life.
- *The Purge / Snowpiercer* - The powerful profit from the suffering of the weak.
- *The Trial / SCP Foundation* - You cannot fight the system, only survive it.

Game Ideas

- A city where laws are absolute. Breaking even the smallest rule leads to horrific punishment.
- The player characters are trapped in a cycle: wake up, work, obey, repeat.
- A faceless bureaucrat decides who lives and who disappears.

Social Horror

The greatest horror doesn't always come from monsters - it comes from people. Social Horror explores the cruelty of human nature, where societal pressure, groupthink, or cultural expectations become oppressive forces. Whether through mob mentality, forced conformity, or ritualized violence, the terror lies in how easily people turn against one another.

- **Suggested Themes:** Fear of ostracization, cult-like behavior, forced conformity, unspoken social rules, and human cruelty disguised as civility.
- **Content Adjustments:** If a player is uncomfortable with themes of social exclusion or oppression, consider softening the horror. Perhaps the group isn't malicious but rather misguided, or their rituals have a logical, albeit terrifying, explanation.

Examples in Horror Media

- *Midsommar / The Wicker Man* - A peaceful community with horrifying traditions.
- *Get Out / The Lottery* - A smiling, welcoming group hiding something sinister.
- *The Mist* - Fear leads to mob rule, scapegoating, and paranoia.

Game Ideas

- A town where people vanish, and no one wants to talk about it.
- A noble's party is more than it seems, and they're not allowed to leave.
- The players want to save people from an external threat, but the people find their own nefarious and twisted solution.

Final Words

The best horror experiences immerse, excite, and challenge players without pushing them too far. This guide helps ensure that everyone enjoys the game in a way that suits them.

- Discuss boundaries openly.
- Check in with players periodically.
- Keep the horror fun, not distressing.

At the end of the day, the goal is to have fun and tell an unforgettable story together.

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Prepare Yourself for Madness

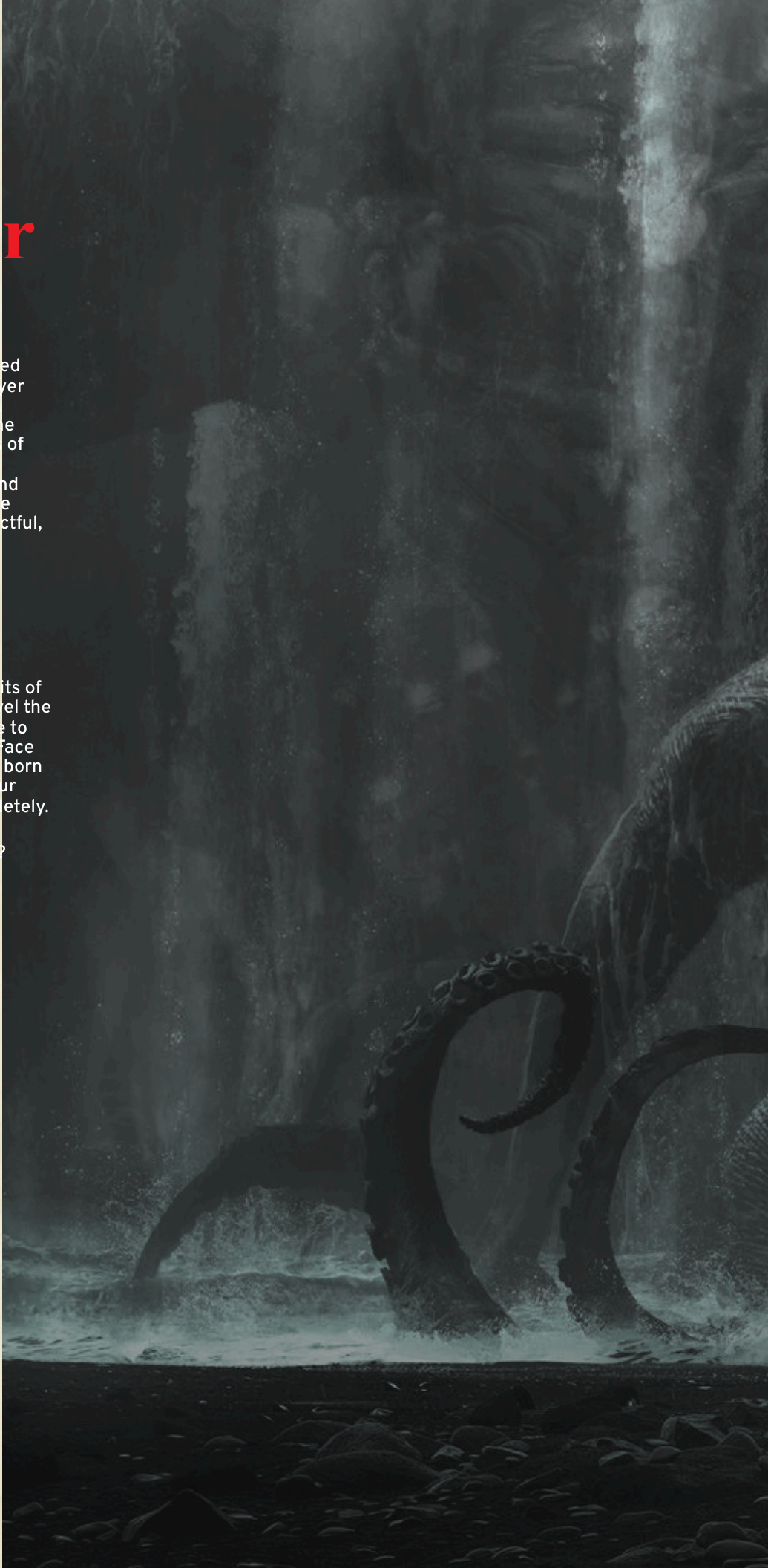
The *Horror, Stress and Madness* is a suggested ruleset for any Dungeons & Dragons roleplayer looking to add a bit of horror to their games.

It contains rules for how Horrors impact the characters, potentially leading to high levels of Stress, opening the door to Madness.

It also contains some recommendations and tools to help ensure that everyone enjoys the game experience in a way that is safe, respectful, and immersive.

Descend into the shadows and test the limits of your sanity. Confront eldritch horrors, unravel the secrets that lurk in the dark, and struggle to maintain your mind as much as your life. Face unspeakable terrors, wield strange powers born from madness, and discover how far your character can go before they unravel completely.

The Old Gods rise. Will you answer their call?



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